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要





【書類名】 明細書・

【発明の名称】 磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;

上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一 方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大するエンハ ンス層とを含む磁気記録媒体。

【請求項2】 上記エンハンス層が、Co、Ni、Fe及びCoNiFe合金からなる群から選ばれた一種から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項3】 上記エンハンス層が、Co、NiまたはFeと遷移金属との合金から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項4】 上記記録層または上記磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されており、上記エンハンス層は記録層または上記磁化安定化層よりも高濃度のCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項5】 上記エンハンス層が、上記非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間に存在する第1エンハンス層と、上記非磁性層と記録層の間に存在する第2エンハンス層とを含むことを特徴とする請求項1~4のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項 6 】 上記エンハンス層が、 $0.2\sim2$ n mの膜厚を有することを特徴とする請求項 $1\sim5$ のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項7】 上記非磁性層が、Ruから形成されていることを特徴とする 請求項1~6のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項8】 上記磁化安定化層が第1及び第2磁化安定化層を含み、上記 非磁性層が第1及び第2非磁性層を含み、第1非磁性層は第1磁化安定化層と第





2磁化安定化層の間に形成され、第2非磁性層は第2磁化安定化層と記録層との間に形成されており、上記エンハンス層が第2非磁性層と記録層の間並びに第2 非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、第1磁化安定化層と第1非磁性層の間並びに第1非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大する補助エンハンス層を備える請求項1~7のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項9】 上記補助エンハンス層が、第1非磁性層及び第1磁化安定化層の間に形成された第1補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2磁化安定化層の間に形成された第2補助エンハンス層と;を含む請求項8に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項10】 さらに、下地層が形成された基板を備え、該下地層上に、上記磁化安定化層を備えることを特徴とする請求項1~9のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項11】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と; 上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;を備え、

上記磁気記録媒体の外部磁界に対する磁化曲線がヒステリシスループを示し、 磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変 化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在し、且つ磁化曲線から求めた交 換結合磁界が1kOe以上であることを特徴とする磁気記録媒体。

【請求項12】 さらに、上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化 安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間 の交換結合を増大するエンハンス層を含むことを特徴とする請求項11に記載の 磁気記録媒体。

【請求項13】 上記記録層及び磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含め、エンハンス層がCo、NiまたはFeから形成されていることを特徴とする請求項11または12に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項14】 上記磁化安定化層は、上記記録層を形成する強磁性材料よ



りも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項 11に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項15】 上記磁化安定化層が、Co、Ni、Fe及びCoNiFe 合金からなる群から選ばれた一種から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項1 4に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項16】 上記磁化安定化層が、Co、NiまたはFeと遷移金属との合金から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項14に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項17】 上記記録層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されていることを特徴とすることを特徴とする請求項15または16に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項18】 磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

上記記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料から形 成された補助磁性層と;

上記記録層と補助磁性層との間に形成された非磁性層と;を含む磁気記録媒体

【請求項19】 上記補助磁性層が、Co、Ni、Fe及びCoNiFe合金からなる群から選ばれた一種から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項18に記載の磁気記録媒体。

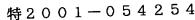
【請求項20】 上記補助磁性層が、Co、NiまたはFeと遷移金属との合金から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項18に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項21】 上記記録層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されていることを特徴とする請求項19または20に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項22】 更に、上記記録層と非磁性層との間に、上記補助磁性層と記録層との交換結合を増大するエンハンス層を備える請求項18~21のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項23】 上記非磁性層が、Ruから形成されていることを特徴とする請求項18~22のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項24】 上記補助磁性層が、1~5 n mの膜厚を有することを特徴





とする請求項18~23のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項25】 更に、基板と、第2の非磁性層と、強磁性材料から形成され且つ記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層とを含み、上記基板と補助磁性層との間で、補助磁性層に近い側に第2の非磁性層が位置付けられていることを特徴とする請求項18~24のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項26】 更に、基板と第2の非磁性層と第2の補助磁性層とを含み、上記基板と補助磁性層との間で、補助磁性層に近い側に第2の非磁性層が位置付けられていることを特徴とする請求項18~24のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項27】 更に、上記基板上に形成された下地層を備えることを特徴とする請求項25または26のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項28】 上記記録層が面内方向の磁化を有する請求項1、11及び18のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録媒体。

【請求項29】 請求項1、11及び18のいずれか一項に記載の磁気記録 媒体と;

上記磁気記録媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと;

上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置と;を含む磁気記録装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

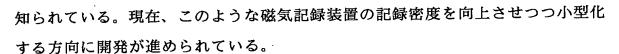
【発明の属する技術分野】

本発明は、磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置に関し、特に、熱安定性に優れ、高密度記録に好適な面内磁気記録媒体及びその面内磁気記録媒体を装着した磁気記録装置に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】

近年の高度情報化社会の進展にはめざましいものがあり、文字情報のみならず 音声及び画像情報を高速に処理することができるマルチメディアが普及してきて いる。マルチメディアの一つとしてコンピュータ等に装着される磁気記録装置が



[0003]

典型的な磁気記録装置は複数の磁気ディスクをスピンドル上に回転可能に装着 している。各磁気ディスクは基板とその上に形成された磁性膜から構成されており、情報の記録は特定の磁化方向を有する磁区を磁性膜中に形成することにより 行なわれる。

[0004]

このような磁気記録装置の高密度記録化を実現するためには、磁性膜を構成する粒子径を微小化するとともに各粒子間の相互作用を低下させることが要望されている。しかしながら、粒子径の微小化と粒子間相互作用の低下は、粒子の熱安定性を低下させるという問題がある。

[0005]

磁気ディスク、特に面内方向の磁化を有する磁気ディスクの熱安定性を向上させる技術として、記録層の下地層として、軟磁性のいわゆるキーパー層を設ける方法や記録層の磁化と逆向きの磁化を有する層を設ける方法が知られている。後者の方法の一つとして、図6に示したように、磁気ディスクのCoCrPtB記録層とCoCrPtB磁化安定化層との間に、磁気結合層としてのRu薄膜を形成することにより熱安定性を向上させる技術がE.N. Abarra et al.の文献に発表されている(E.N. Abarra et al. TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR2000-34(2000-10))。図6に示した磁気ディスク構造において、記録層と磁化安定化層との間に磁気結合層として0.5~1 n m程度の厚みのRu層を介在させると、記録層と磁化安定化層との間に磁気結合層として0.5~1 n m程度の厚みのRu層を介在させると、記録層と磁化安定化層との間に反強磁性的な交換結合が働く。従って、それらの層は反平行の磁化を有するために、記録層の磁化が磁化安定化層により安定化される。このRu層による反強磁性的な交換結合は、記録層の磁化を一層熱的に安定化せ、磁気ディスクの記録再生特性を改善することができることがこの文献に示されている。

[0006]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】

しかしながら、磁気記録装置のさらなる高密度記録化を実現するには、上記文献に開示された磁気ディスクよりも一層熱安定性に優れた磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置が要求されている。

[0007]

本発明の第1目的は、熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体、特に面内磁気記録媒体 及びそれを備えた磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0008]

本発明の第2の目的は、記録した情報の安定性(記録安定性)に優れた磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0009]

本発明の第3の目的は、高密度磁気記録に適した磁気記録媒体及びそれを装着 した磁気記録装置を提供することにある。

[0010]

【課題を解決するための手段】

本発明の第1の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

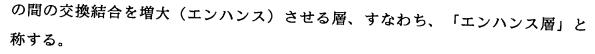
強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;

上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大するエンハンス層とを含む磁気記録媒体が提供される。

[0011]

本発明者は、図6に示した従来型構造を有する磁気ディスクをさらに改良させるべく研究を重ねたところ、Ru層(非磁性層)と記録層との界面及び/またはRu層(非磁性層)と磁化安定化層との界面に、数原子層のCo層を介在させることにより、上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を著しく向上させることができることを見出した。上記界面に介在させる層はCoのみならず、記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合を向上させることができる後述する種々の物質から構成することができ、本明細書においてはこの層を記録層と磁化安定化層



[0012]

本発明者の知見によると、このエンハンス層が、記録層と磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を向上させることができる理由は以下の通りである。図6に示した従来型の磁気ディスクでは、CoCrPtB記録層とCoCrPtB磁化安定化層がRu層を介して積層されている。ここで、記録層と磁化安定化層はRu原子層を介して交換結合している。この交換結合は、記録層と磁化安定化層中のCo原子同士がRu原子を介して電子軌道が結合していることに基づくと考えられる。このような結合は、例えば、GMRヘッドにおける人工格子中の結合にも見られる。

[0013]

しかしながら、記録層とRu層との界面を観察すると、記録層は、CoCrPtBから構成されているために、記録層の結晶粒子はCoリッチでありその粒界はCrリッチな組成を示しており、この結果、記録層のRu層側の表面にはCo原子よりも多くのCrの原子が露出していると考えられる。磁化安定化層もまた記録層と同様にCoCr合金(CoCrPtB)から構成されているために、磁化安定層のRu層側の表面にはCoを覆うCr原子が多量に露出していると考えられる。これらのCr原子層は、前述のRu原子を介する記録層と磁化安定化層中のCo原子同士の電子結合を阻害し、記録層と磁化安定化層の交換結合を弱めていると考えられる。本発明では、Cr原子が表面に露出している記録層または磁化安定化層をエンハンス層で覆うことにより、記録層と磁化安定化層との交換結合をエンハンス層を構成するCoなどの原子間における交換結合により改善させていると考えられる。

[0014]

エンハンス層は、Co、NiもしくはFeまたはCoNiFe合金から形成し得る。または、エンハンス層は、Co、NiまたはFeと、遷移金属、特に、Pt、Au、Ag、Cu、Pdなどの貴金属との合金から形成され得る。それらの原子または合金は、非磁性層を介して電子的に結合して交換結合磁界を増大する

働きがある。あるいは、記録層または磁化安定化層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料から形成されている場合には、記録層または磁化安定化層より高濃度のCo、NiまたはFeを含む材料からエンハンス層を形成することもまた有効である。

[0015]

上記エンハンス層は、上記非磁性層と記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在すればよいが、非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間に存在する第1エンハンス層と、非磁性層と記録層の間に存在する第2エンハンス層とを含むことが記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合を一層高めるために望ましい。

[0016]

上記磁化安定化層が第1及び第2磁化安定化層を含み、上記非磁性層が第1及び第2非磁性層を含み、第1非磁性層は第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層の間に形成され、第2非磁性層は第2磁化安定化層と記録層の間に形成されていても良い。この場合、上記エンハンス層が第2非磁性層と記録層の間並びに第2非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に存在し、第1磁化安定化層と第1非磁性層の間並びに第1非磁性層と第2磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に第1磁化安定化層と第2磁化安定化層との間の交換結合を増大する補助エンハンス層を備え得る。さらに、上記補助エンハンス層が、第1非磁性層及び第1磁化安定化層の間に形成された第1補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2磁化安定化層の間に形成された第1補助エンハンス層と;第1非磁性層及び第2磁化安定化層の間に形成された第2補助エンハンス層と;を含み得る。補助エンハンス層は、上記エンハンス層と同じ材料から構成され得る

[0017]

上記エンハンス層(及び補助エンハンス層)は、交換結合のエンハンス効果を 有意義にするために、0.2~3 n m、好ましくは、0.2~2 n mの膜厚を有 することが望ましい。

[0018]

非磁性層は、Ruから形成され得るが、これに限らず、Rh、Ir、Hf、Cu、Cr、Ag、Au、Re、Mo、Nb、W、Ta、Vなどの遷移金属、Co

CrRuのようなCoCr系の非磁性合金を用い得る。交換結合を一層高めるた めにはRuが望ましい。なお、本発明においてこの非磁性層は記録層と磁化安定 化層とを磁気的に結合する働きを有するので磁気結合層とも呼ぶ。

[0019]

本発明の磁気記録媒体において記録層は結晶質であって、該結晶質相がコバル ト(Co)を主体とした合金にしてよい。このCo合金においては、CoにCr , Pt, Ta, Nb, Ti, Si, B, P, Pd, V, Tb, Gd, Sm, Nd 、Dy、Ho、若しくはEu、又はそれらの組み合わせを含み得る。 [0020]

ここで、記録層にクロム(Cr)を含むと、Coを主体とした結晶粒子(磁性 粒子)の粒界近傍又は粒界部にCrの偏析部分を形成することができる。記録層 中にさらにTa、Nb、Ti、B若しくはP、又はそれらの元素の組み合わせを 含むと、Crの偏析が促進される。この偏析によって、磁性粒子間の磁気的相互 作用が低減でき、磁化反転単位を構成する磁性粒子数を減らすことができる。従 って、CoCr合金に上記添加物を含む記録層に本発明のエンハンス層を組み合 わせて用いることで、微小な磁化反転単位でありながらも熱揺らぎに強い磁気記 録媒体をもたらすことができる。 [0021]

本発明の磁気記録媒体は、さらに、基板、基板上に形成された下地層を備え得 る。この場合、下地層上に、磁化安定化層を備え得る。基板はガラス、ポリカー ボネートなどのプラスチックから形成し得る。下地層は、Cr若しくはNi、又 は、Cr合金若しくはNi合金から形成され得る。Cr合金又はNi合金は、母 元素以外にCr、Ti、Ta、V、Ru、W、Mo、Nb、Ni、ZrまたはA 1 を含み得る。下地層は、磁性層の結晶配向性や格子定数を制御する目的で使用 される。下地層は、単層または複数層で用いることも可能である。 [0022]

本発明の第2の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

強磁性材料から形成され、記録層の磁化を安定化させる磁化安定化層と;

上記記録層と上記磁化安定化層との間に存在する非磁性層と;を備え、

上記磁気記録媒体の外部磁界に対する磁化曲線がヒステリシスループを示し、 磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させたときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変 化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に存在し、且つ磁化曲線から求めた交 換結合磁界が1k〇e以上であることを特徴とする磁気記録媒体が提供される。

本発明の磁化安定化層を有する磁気記録媒体は、例えば、図4に示すような磁 化曲線で表されるヒステリシスループで表される磁気特性を有する。このヒステ リシスループでは、磁気記録媒体の磁化を飽和させた後に外部磁界を低下させた ときに、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率が極大を示す点が正の外部磁界の領域に 存在する。このように磁化の変化率が急激に変化するのは、磁気記録媒体の磁化 が飽和しているときには、記録層と磁化安定化層の磁化がともに平行であり、外 部磁界が低下して磁化の変化率が極大となる領域で磁化安定化層の磁化が反転し て記録層の磁化を安定化させるためであると考えられる。この領域では、図4に 示すようにマイナーヒステリシスループが観測され得る。このマイナーヒステリ シスループを図5に示す。マイナーヒステリシスループの中心点から求めた交換 結合磁界 H_{ex} は、1 k O e 以上、好ましくは1. 5 k O e 以上であり、図6 に 示した従来型の磁気記録媒体に比べて著しく大きく、それゆえ、本発明の磁気記 録媒体は熱安定性に優れることが分かる。

[0024]

このような大きな交換結合磁界H ex を生じさせるには、例えば、非磁性層と 記録層の間並びに非磁性層と磁化安定化層の間の少なくとも一方に、前述のエン ハンス層を存在させればよい。

[0025]

あるいは、磁化安定化層を、記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度 の高い強磁性材料を用いて形成することによっても、大きな交換結合磁界H e x を生じさせることができる。かかる強磁性材料には、前述のエンハンス層に用い 得る材料と同じ材料が好適であり、例えば、記録層がCo、NiまたはFeを含 む強磁性材料から形成されている場合には、記録層より高濃度のCo、Niまた

はFeを含む強磁性材料から形成することができる。また、補助磁性層は、Co、NiもしくはFeなどの単体金属またはCoNiFe合金を用いることもできる。または、Co、NiまたはFeと、遷移金属、特に、Pt、Au、Ag、Cu、Pdなどの貴金属との合金を用いて形成することもできる。このように、第2の態様の磁気記録媒体において、磁化安定化層を、記録層よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料を用いて形成した場合、磁化安定化層は、後述する第3の態様の磁気記録媒体の補助磁性層と同様に記録層との間で強い交換結合力を示すので、記録層の磁化を安定化させることができる。すなわち、記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料で形成された磁化安定化層は、第3の態様の磁気記録媒体の補助磁性層と同様の機能を有する。本発明の第2の態様の磁気記録媒体における磁化安定化層は、第3の態様の磁気記録媒体の補助磁性層と同様の機能を有する。本発明の第2の態様の磁気記録媒体における磁化安定化層は、第3の態様の磁気記録媒体の補助磁性層と同様の機能を有する。本発明の第2の態様の磁気記録媒体における磁化安定化層は、第3の態様の磁気記録媒体の補助磁性層を含む概念である。

[0026]

本発明の第3の態様に従えば、磁気記録媒体であって、

強磁性材料から形成された記録層と;

上記記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料から形成された補助磁性層と;

上記記録層と補助磁性層との間に形成された非磁性層と;を含む磁気記録媒体が提供される。

[0027]

本発明の第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、非磁性層を介して記録層と交換結合する補助磁性層を、記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料を用いて形成する。かかる磁性材料としては、上述のエンハンス層と同様の強磁性材料を用いることができる。例えば、記録層がCo、NiまたはFeを含む強磁性材料から形成されている場合には、記録層よりも高濃度のCo、NiまたはFeなどの磁性原子を含む強磁性材料から形成することができる。また、補助磁性層は、Co、NiもしくはFeなどの単体金属またはCoNiFe合金から形成することもできる。または補助磁性層は、Co、NiまたはFeと、遷移金属、特に、Pt、Au、Ag、Cu、Pdなどの貴金属との合金からも形成さ

れ得る。このように、上述のエンハンス層と同様の強磁性材料から形成された補助磁性層により、補助磁性層と記録層との間に生じる交換結合力は、従来技術の欄で記載したような磁気記録媒体の磁化安定化層と記録層との間で生じる交換結合力よりも大きくなる。それゆえ、記録層の熱安定性は従来よりも一層高まり、更なる高密度記録を実現することができる。

[0028]

上述したように、本発明の第1の態様の磁気記録媒体は、磁化安定化層で安定化された記録層の磁化を、エンハンス層を設けて磁化安定化層と記録層との間の交換結合力を増大させることによって、より一層安定化させていたが、第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、補助磁性層と記録層との間に強い交換結合力が発生しているので、第1の態様の磁気記録媒体と同様に、記録層の磁化を安定化させることができる。したがって、本発明の第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、第1の態様の磁気記録媒体よりも簡単な構成で記録層の熱安定性を向上させることができる。

[0029]

本発明の第3の態様に従う磁気記録媒体において、補助磁性層は、記録層との間で働く交換結合力を有意義にするために1 n m ~ 5 n m の膜厚を有することが好ましい。

[0030]

本発明の第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、非磁性層と記録層との間に、記録層と補助磁性層との間で生じる交換結合力を更に増大させるためのエンハンス層を設けることができる。エンハンス層は、第1の態様の磁気記録媒体のエンハンス層と同様の材料を用いて形成し得る。かかるエンハンス層は、記録層と補助磁性層との間で働く交換結合のエンハンス効果を有意義にするために0.2~2.0 nmの膜厚を有することが望ましい。

[0031]

本発明の第3の磁気記録媒体は、更に、基板と、第2の非磁性層と、記録層の磁化を熱的に安定化させる磁化安定化層とを備え得、補助磁性層と基板との間に第2の非磁性層と磁化安定化層が存在し、且つ第2の非磁性層が補助磁性層に近い側に位置付けられて構成される。第2の非磁性層は、上述の非磁性層と同じ材

料から構成され得、磁化安定化層は、例えば、記録層と同じ材料から構成され得る。かかる磁気記録媒体は、磁化安定化層により、記録層の磁化をより一層安定化させることができる。

[0032]

また、本発明の第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、基板と第2の非磁性層と第2の 補助磁性層とを備えることができ、上記基板と補助磁性層との間に第2の非磁性 層と第2の補助磁性層が存在し且つ補助磁性層に近い側に第2の非磁性層が位置 するように構成され得る。第2の補助磁性層は、前述のエンハンス層と同じ材料 を用いて形成し得る。かかる構造の磁気記録媒体は、第2の補助磁性層を形成し たことにより、交換結合磁界がより一層増大しているので熱安定性に極めて優れ る。

[0033]

本発明の第4の態様に従えば、本発明の第1、第2または第3の態様に従う磁 気記録媒体と;

上記磁気記録媒体に情報を記録又は再生するための磁気ヘッドと;

上記磁気記録媒体を上記磁気ヘッドに対して駆動するための駆動装置と;を含む 磁気記録装置が提供される。

[0034]

本発明に従う磁気記録装置は、熱安定性に優れた磁気記録媒体を装着しているために、長時間に渡る記録安定性に優れる。

[0035]

【発明の実施の形態】

以下に、本発明の磁気記録媒体及び磁気記録装置を実施例及び比較例を用いて 具体的に説明する。ただし、本発明はこれらの実施例に限定されない。

[0036]

【実施例1】

本発明に従う磁気記録媒体の典型例を図1の断面図に示す。磁気記録媒体10は、ガラス基板20上に、第1下地層2、第2下地層4、磁化安定化層6、第1 エンハンス層8、磁気結合層(非磁性層)12、第2エンハンス層8、記録層1

6及び保護層18を備える。各層は以下のようにDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置 を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。

[0037]

直径2. 5 inch (6. 25 cm) のガラス基板20上に、第1金属下地層2として、NiA1膜をDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。ターゲットには原子比でNi:A1=50:50のNiA1合金を用いた。NiA1膜の膜厚は50nmであった。スパッタ時のArガス圧は0. 3 Pa、投入電力は0. 5 kWであった。基板は、スパッタ開始前に、スパッタ室を 1×10^{-5} Pa以下に減圧した後に3 40 $\mathbb C$ に加熱した。この条件下での成膜速度は約3 nm/秒であった。

[0038]

第2金属下地層4として、CrMo膜を第1金属下地層2上に膜厚20nmで 形成した。ターゲットにはMo:27原子%のCrMo合金を用いた。成膜条件 は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0039]

磁化安定化層 6 として、C o C r P t B 膜を第 1 金属下地層 4 上に膜厚 6 n m で形成した。ターゲットにはC o 6 4 C r 2 0 P t 1 2 B 4 合金を用いた。成膜条件は、第 1 金属下地層 2 の場合と同様にした。

[0040]

次いで、第1エンハンス層8として、Co膜を磁化安定化層6上に膜厚1nmで形成した。ターゲットにはCoを用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件として、投入電力は100Wとし、基板とターゲット間の間隔を長くした以外は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0041]

次いで、磁気結合層12として、Ru膜を第1エンハンス層8上に膜厚0.8 nmで形成した。ターゲットにはRuを用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件は、第1 エンハンス層8の場合と同様にした。

[0042]

第2エンハンス層14としてのCo膜を、第1エンハンス層8と同様に形成し

た。第1エンハンス層8及び第2エンハンス層14は、記録層16と磁化安定化層6との間の交換結合を増大させる働きを有する。

[0043]

記録層16として、面内方向の磁化を有するCoCrPtB膜を第2エンハンス層14上に膜厚18nmで形成した。ターゲットにはCo64Cr20Pt12B4G6金を用いた。成膜条件は、磁化安定化層6の場合と同様にした。

[0044]

最後に、CoCrPtB記録層16上に、保護膜としてのカーボン層を膜厚5 nmで形成した。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様であった。こうし て図1に示した構造の磁気ディスク10を製造した。

[0045]

【比較例1】

比較例として、第1及び第2エンハンス層を形成しなかった以外は、実施例1 と同様にして磁気ディスクを製造した。図7に、こうして得られた比較例の磁気 ディスク50の構造を示す。

[0046]

「磁化曲線の評価」

実施例1で製造した磁気ディスクの磁化特性を以下のようにして測定した。 V SM (Vibration Sample Magnetometer) により磁界を印加して外部磁界に対する磁化曲線を観測した。得られた結果を図4に示す。図4のヒステリシスループから分かるように、正方向の外部磁界を印加して磁化を飽和させた後、外部磁界を低下させてゆくと、外部磁界がゼロになる前に磁化が急激に低下する領域が存在する。この領域では、外部磁界に対する磁化の変化率(δM/δH)が極大となる点が現れている。そしてこの領域では磁化曲線がヒステリシスを示すマイナーループを描いている。このマイナーループが生じるのは、変化率の極大点に至る前は記録層16と磁化安定化層6の磁化の向きが下であるが、極大点を境に磁化安定化層6の磁化の向きが反転するためであると考えられる。

[0047]

図5(a)にマイナーループの拡大図を示す。このマイナーループは、正方向

の外部磁界を印加して記録層及び磁化安定化層の磁化を飽和させた後、磁界を低下させてゆき、磁化の変化率が安定化した後に、再度外部磁界を増加させることにより求めた磁化曲線である。ここで、マイナーループの上端と下端の中点にあるループの中心における磁界 H は、記録層 1 6 と安定化層 6 の磁化の交換結合を示す交換結合磁界 H e x として知られている。この実施例で得られた磁気ディスクの場合、H e x は 1 . 4 k O e であることが分かった。一方、比較例の磁気ディスクでは、図 5 (b) に示すようなヒステリシスマイナーループが得られ、H e x は 0 . 4 k O e であることが分かった。従って、本発明では第 1 及び第 2 エンハンス層を、記録層及び磁気結合層の界面、並びに磁気結合層と磁化安定化層との界面にそれぞれ設けたために、記録層と磁化安定化層との交換結合力が著しく向上している。参考として、従来技術の説明の欄で述べた文献に開示された磁気ディスクのH e x は 4 5 0 (O e) 程度であることが報告されている。

[0048]

さらに、実施例1及び比較例で得られた磁気記録媒体の活性化体積Vを測定し、磁気記録媒体の熱安定性の指標となる値である $Ku\cdot V/(k\cdot T)$ を求めたところ、実施例1の磁気記録媒体では約71であったのに対して比較例の磁気記録媒体では65であった。このことからも、本発明の磁気記録媒体は熱安定性に優れることが分かる。さらに、実施例の磁気記録媒体では、面内磁気記録媒体の高密度記録の可能性を示す指標である $Brt(=4\pi Mr\cdot t)$ 、Mrt 留磁界、t は厚みをそれぞれ示す))は、約44 $G\mu$ mであった。

[0049]

【変形例1】

本発明に従う磁気ディスクでは、記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合をエンハンスするエンハンス層を、記録層及び磁気結合層(非磁性層)の界面、あるいは磁気結合層と磁化安定化層との界面のいずれか一方に設けてもよい。実施例1の変形例として、図2に第1エンハンス層を形成しなかった磁気ディスク30の構造を示し、図3に第2エンハンス層を形成しなかった磁気ディスク40の構造を示す。

[0050]

【変形例2】

実施例1では、磁化安定化層6及び磁気結合層12をそれぞれ一層ずつ形成したが、それらを2層ずつ形成してもよい。すなわち、CrMo第2下地層4上に、CoCrPtB第1磁化安定化層、第1エンハンス層、Ru第1磁気結合層、Co第2エンハンス層、CoCrPtB第2磁化安定化層、第3エンハンス層、Ru第2磁気結合層、Co第4エンハンス層、CoCrPtB記録層及びカーボン保護層を備える構造にすることができる。ここで、第1及び第2エンハンス層(補助エンハンス層)は、第1及び第2磁化安定化層間の交換結合を増大する作用を有し、第3及び第4エンハンス層は、記録層と第2磁化安定化層間の交換結合を増大する作用を有する。あるいは、図2に示した磁気ディスク30において、第2エンハンス層14と記録層16との間に、第2磁化安定化層、第2磁気結合層及び第4エンハンス層を加えても良い。さらに、図3に示した磁気ディスク40において、磁気結合層12と記録層16との間に、第2磁化安定化層、第4エンハンス層及び第2磁気結合層を加えても良い。

[0051]

【実施例2】

実施例1と同様のプロセスにより複数枚の磁気ディスクを作製し、各ディスクの保護層上に潤滑剤を塗布した後、それらを磁気記録装置のスピンドルに同軸上に取り付けた。磁気記録装置の概略構成を図8及び図9に示す。図8は磁気記録装置の上面の図であり、図9は、図8の破線A-A'における磁気記録装置60の断面図である。記録用磁気ヘッドとして、2.1Tの高飽和磁束密度を有する軟磁性膜を用いた薄膜磁気ヘッドを用い、再生のために巨大磁気抵抗効果を有するデュアルスピンバルブ型磁気ヘッドを用いた。記録用磁気ヘッド及び再生用磁気ヘッドは一体化されており、図8及び図9では磁気ヘッド53として示した。この一体型の磁気ヘッド53は磁気ヘッド用駆動系54により制御される。複数の磁気ディスク10は回転駆動系51のスピンドル52により同軸回転される。磁気記録装置の磁気ヘッド面と磁気ディスクとの距離は11nmに保った。この磁気ディスクに40Gbits/inch²(6.20Gbits/cm²)に相当する信号を記録して磁気ディスクのS/Nを評価したところ、25dBの再

生出力が得られた。

[0052]

磁気記録装置60の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、温度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、24.3dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は3%であった。

[0053]

【比較例2】

比較例の磁気ディスク50を実施例2と同様にして磁気記録装置に組み込んだ。この磁気記録装置の記録安定性を評価するために、磁気記録装置60を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、22.5dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は10%であった。従って、本発明の磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置は記録安定性に関して優れていることが分かる。

[0054]

【実施例3】

本発明に従う磁気記録媒体の別の具体例の概略構成を図10に示す。磁気記録媒体70は、ガラス基板20上に、第1下地層2、第2下地層4、補助磁性層78、磁気結合層(非磁性層)12、記録層16及び保護層18を備える。各層は以下のようにDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置を用いてスパッタリングにより形成した。

[0055]

まず、直径 2. 5 i n c h (6.25 c m) のガラス基板をDCマグネトロンスパッタ装置の準備室に装填した。準備室を減圧し、真空度を 1×10^{-5} P a にした後、ガラス基板上の水分を除去するためにガラス基板を200で10分間加熱した。次いで、ガラス基板を、準備室から、 1×10^{-5} P a の真空度を有する成膜室に搬送した。成膜室において、ガラス基板を340でまで加熱した

[0056]

加熱されたガラス基板20上に、第1金属下地層2として、NiA1膜を形成した。ターゲットには原子比でNi:A1=50:50のNiA1合金を用いた。NiA1膜の膜厚は50nmであった。スパッタ時のArガス圧は0.3Pa、投入電力は500Wであった。

[0057]

第2金属下地層4として、CrMo膜を第1金属下地層2上に膜厚20nmで形成した。ターゲットにはMo:27原子%のCrMo合金を用いた。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0058]

次いで、補助磁性層78として、CoPt膜を第2金属下地層上に膜厚2nmで形成した。ターゲットにはPt:17原子%のCoPt合金を用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件として、投入電力は100Wとし、基板とターゲット間の間隔を長くした以外は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0059]

次いで、磁気結合層12として、Ru膜を補助磁性層78上に膜厚0.8nm で形成した。ターゲットにはRuを用いた。スパッタ時の成膜条件は、補助磁性 層78の場合と同様にした。

[0060]

記録層16として、面内方向の磁化を有するCoCrPtB膜を磁気結合層上に膜厚18nmで形成した。ターゲットには Co_{64} Cr_{20} Pt_{12} B_4 合金を用いた。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様にした。

[0061]

最後に、CoCrPtB記録層16上に、保護膜としてのカーボン層を膜厚5nmで形成した。成膜条件は、第1金属下地層2の場合と同様であった。こうして図10に示した構造の磁気ディスク70を製造した。

[0062]

こうして得られた磁気ディスクについて、実施例1と同様に、VSMにより磁界を印加して外部磁界に対する磁化曲線を観測した。得られた結果を図11に示

す。このヒステリシスループからわかるように、この実施例で製造された磁気ディスクも、実施例1で製造した磁気ディスクと同様に、正方向の外部磁界を印加して磁化を飽和させた後、外部磁界を低下させてゆくと、外部磁界がゼロになる前に磁化が急激に低下する領域が存在していた。そして、図11からわかるように、この領域で、磁化曲線がヒステリシスを示すマイナーループを描いていた。図11の下方にマイナーループの拡大図を示した。このマイナーループから、実施例1で製造した磁気ディスクの場合と同様にして交換結合磁界 H_{ex} を求めたところ、交換結合磁界 H_{ex} は、1.7kOeであった。

[0063]

つぎに、上記プロセスと同様にして複数枚の磁気ディスクを作製し、それぞれの磁気ディスクの保護層上に潤滑剤を塗布した後、それらを実施例2と同様に図8及び図9に示す磁気記録装置に組み込んだ。この磁気記録装置を用いて、実施例2と同様に磁気ディスクに信号を記録して磁気ディスクのS/Nを評価したところ、25dBの再生出力が得られた。

[0064]

次いで、かかる磁気記録装置の記録安定性を評価するために、実施例2の場合と同様に磁気記録装置を80℃、湿度80%の環境下に100時間置いた。100時間経過後に、記録した信号を再生して磁気ディスクのS/Nを測定したところ、24.5dBの再生出力が得られた。すなわち、上記環境下での記録信号の低下率は2%であった。したがって、比較例2の磁気記録装置との比較から、本発明の磁気ディスクを備える磁気記録装置は記録安定性に関して優れていることがわかる。

[0065]

【変形例3】

実施例3で製造した磁気ディスクの変形例として、図12に示すように、磁気結合層12と記録層16との界面にエンハンス層79を設けてもよい。エンハンス層79は、実施例1で作製した磁気ディスクのエンハンス層8と同様の材料を用いて形成することができ、記録層16と補助磁性層78との間の交換結合を増大する作用を有する。

[0066]

【変形例4】

実施例3で製造した磁気ディスクの別の変形例として、図13に示すように、第2下地層3上に、更に記録層16の磁化を安定化させるための磁化安定化層86及び第2磁気結合層82を設けてもよい。磁化安定化層86は、実施例1で作製した磁気ディスクの磁化安定化層6と同様の材料を用いることができる。第2磁気結合層82は、実施例3と同様にRuを用いることができる。また、更に別の変形例として、図13に示した磁気ディスクにおいて、磁化安定化層86を、実施例1で用いたエンハンス層で置き換えて構成することも可能である。

[0067]

以上、本発明を実施例により具体的に説明してきたが、本発明はそれらに限定されない。基板、第1及び第2金属下地層、補助磁性層、磁化安定化層、磁気結合層、第1及び第2エンハンス層及び記録層は、実施例で示した材料に限らず、種々の知られた材料で構成することができる。

[0068]

【発明の効果】

本発明の第1の態様の磁気記録媒体は、エンハンス層の存在により記録層と磁化安定化層の間の交換結合力が著しく向上しているために熱安定に優れる。従って、高密度記録のために微小磁区を形成しても、熱揺らぎが少なく、記録した情報を長期間に渡って安定に保持することができる。また、本発明の第2の態様の磁気記録媒体は、1kOe以上の交換結合磁界を有するので、熱安定性に極めて優れ、高密度記録を実現できる。また、本発明の第3の態様の磁気記録媒体は、記録層を形成する強磁性材料よりも磁性原子濃度の高い強磁性材料から形成された補助磁性層により、記録層と補助磁性層との間で強い交換結合力が発生するので、第1の態様の磁気記録媒体よりも簡単な層構成で、第1の態様の磁気記録媒体と同様に熱安定性を高めることができる。

[0069]

本発明の磁気記録媒体を備える磁気記録装置は、記録安定性に優れ、例えば、 $40\,\mathrm{G}\,\mathrm{b}\,\mathrm{i}\,\mathrm{t}\,\mathrm{s}/\mathrm{i}\,\mathrm{n}\,\mathrm{c}\,\mathrm{h}^{\,2}$ (6. $20\,\mathrm{G}\,\mathrm{b}\,\mathrm{i}\,\mathrm{t}\,\mathrm{s}/\mathrm{c}\,\mathrm{m}^{\,2}$)を超える超高密度

磁気記録の実現を可能にする。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの断面構造を示す図である。

【図2】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの変形例の断面構造を示す図である。

【図3】

実施例1の磁気ディスクの別の変形例の断面構造を示す図である。

【図4】

実施例1の磁気ディスクのヒステリシスループ(メジャーループ)を示すグラフである。

【図5】

図4におけるヒステリシスループのマイナーループを示すグラフである。

【図6】

従来の磁気ディスクの構造を示す断面図である。

【図7】

比較例1の磁気ディスクの断面構造を示す図である。

【図8】

本発明の実施例2に従う磁気記録装置の一例を上方から見た概略構成図である

【図9】

図8に示す磁気記録装置のA-A'方向の断面図である。

【図10】

本発明の実施例3で製造した磁気ディスクの概略断面図である。

【図11】

図10に示す磁気ディスクのヒステリシスループ(メジャーループ)と、ヒステリシスループのマイナーループの拡大図を示すグラフである。

【図12】

本発明の実施例3に従う磁気ディスクの変形例の概略断面図である。

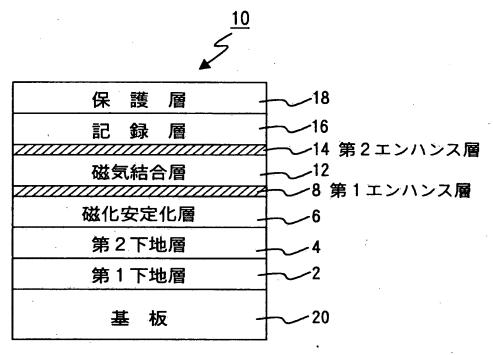
【図13】

本発明の実施例3に従う磁気ディスクの別の変形例の概略断面図である。

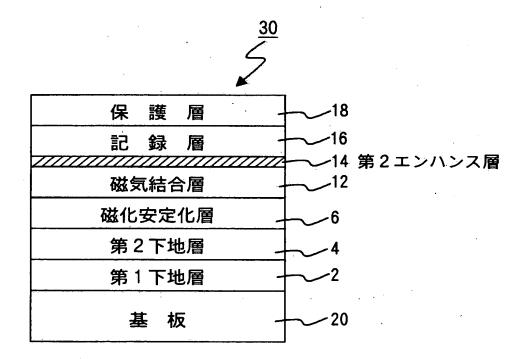
【符号の説明】

- 2 第1金属下地層
- 4 第2金属下地層
- 6 磁化安定化層
- 8 第1エンハンス層
- 10 磁気ディスク
- 12 磁気結合層
- 14 第1エンハンス層
- 16 記録層
- 20 基板
- 52 スピンドル
- 53 磁気ヘッド
- 60 磁気記録装置
- 78 補助磁性層

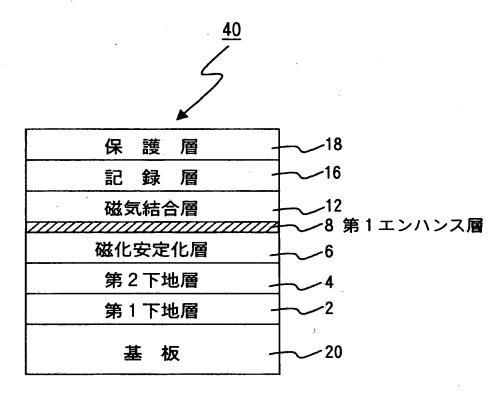
【書類名】 図面【図1】



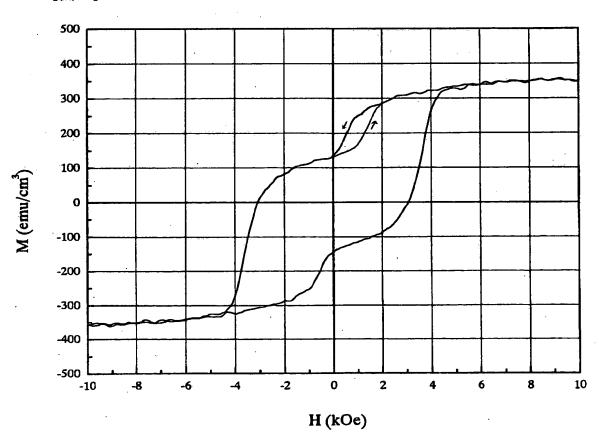
【図2】



【図3】

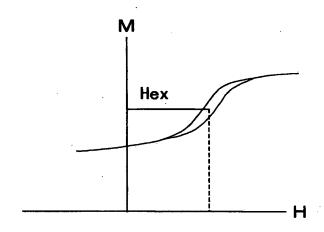


【図4】

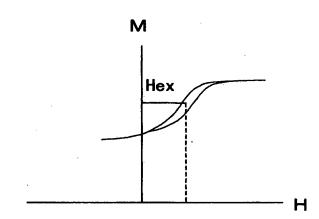


【図5】

(a)



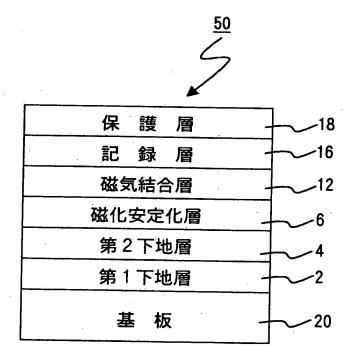
(b)



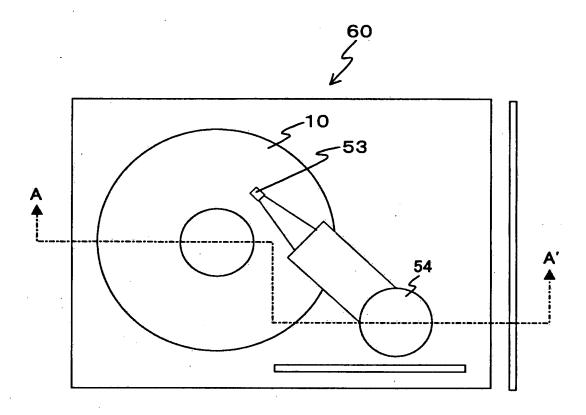
【図6】

保護層		
磁気記録層		
磁気結合層 (Ru)		
磁化安定化層		
下 地 層		
基板		

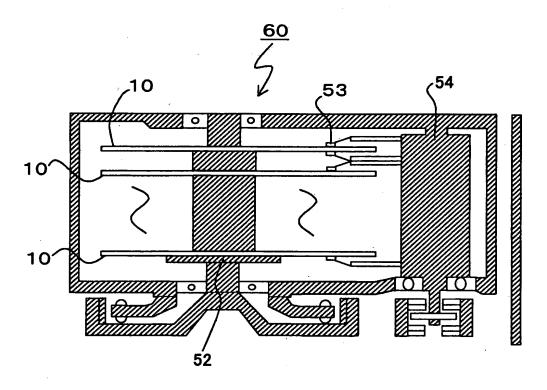
【図7】



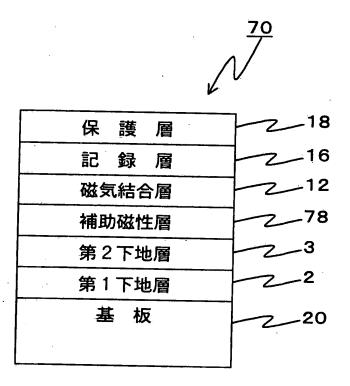
【図8】



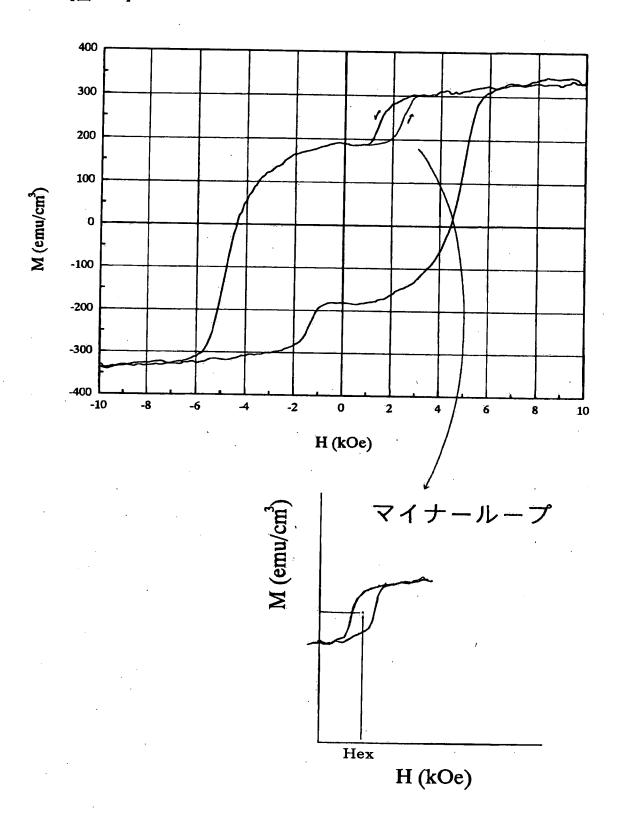
【図9】



【図10】



【図11】



【図12】

保護層	7-2-18
記録層	2_16
エンハンス層	79
磁気結合層	2_12
補助磁性層	7.8
第2下地層	2_3
第1下地層	2_2
基板	2_20
·	

【図13】

保護層	7-2-18
記録層	2_16
エンハンス層	79
磁気結合層	12
補助磁性層	78
第2磁気結合層	2_82
磁化安定化層	2_86
第2下地層	2_3
第1下地層	2_2
基板	-2_20

【書類名】 要約書

【要約】

【課題】 熱安定性に優れた髙密度記録用磁気記録媒体を提供する。

【解決手段】 面内磁気記録媒体10は、基板20上に、NiA1第1下地層2、CrMo第2下地層4、CoCrPtB磁化安定化層6、Ru磁気結合層12、Co第2エンハンス層8、CoCrPtB記録層16及びカーボン保護層18を備える。磁化安定化層6は記録層16の磁化を安定化させ、磁気結合層12は記録層16と磁化安定化層6の交換結合力をもたらす。磁気結合層12及び磁化安定化層6の界面並びに磁気結合層12及び記録層16の界面に、それぞれ、Coから構成された第1エンハンス層8及び第2エンハンス層14を備えることにより、交換結合が著しく向上する。これにより、磁気記録媒体の熱安定性に優れ、長期間に渡る記録安定性に優れた磁気記録装置を提供することができる。

【選択図】 図1

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TRANSLATOR'S VERIFICATION

I hereby declare and state that I am knowledgeable of each of the Japanese and English languages and that I made and reviewed the attached translation of the certified copy of Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-054254, filed on February 28, 2001 from the Japanese language into the English language, and that I believe my attached translation to be accurate, true and correct to the best of my knowledge and ability.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of this application or any patent issued thereon.

Date: _	February 3, 2004
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JAPAN PATENT OFFICE

This is to certify that the annexed is a true copy of the following application as filed with this Office.

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Applicant(s):

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INFORMATION ON APPLICANT'S HISTORY

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[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Specification

[TITLE OF THE INVENTION] MAGNETIC RECORDING MEDIUM AND

MAGNETIC RECORDING APPARATUS

[CLAIMS]

[Claim 1] A magnetic recording medium comprising:
a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic

material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer;

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer; and

an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 2] The information-recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that the enhancing layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Co, Ni, Fe, and CoNiFe alloy.

[Claim 3] The information-recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that the enhancing layer is

formed of an alloy containing a transition metal and Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 4] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 1, characterized in that:

the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer is formed of a material containing Co, Ni or Fe; and

the enhancing layer is formed of a material containing Co, Ni or Fe at a concentration which is higher than a concentration in the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 5] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the enhancing layer includes a first enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and a second enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer.

[Claim 6] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the enhancing layer has a film thickness of 0.2 to 2 nm.

[Claim 7] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the non-magnetic layer is formed of Ru.

[Claim 8] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that:

the magnetization-stabilizing layer includes a first magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the non-magnetic layer includes a first non-magnetic layer and a second non-magnetic layer, the first non-magnetic layer being formed between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the second non-magnetic layer being formed between the second magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer; and

the enhancing layer exists at least at one of positions between the second non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the second non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and comprises an auxiliary enhancing layer which is provided at least at one of positions between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the first non-magnetic layer and between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 9] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 8, characterized in that the auxiliary enhancing layer includes a first auxiliary enhancing layer which is

formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the first magnetization-stabilizing layer, and a second auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 10] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1 to 9, characterized by further comprising a substrate on which an underlying base layer is formed, wherein the magnetization-stabilizing layer is provided on the underlying base layer.

[Claim 11] A magnetic recording medium characterized by comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer,

wherein a magnetization curve of the magnetic recording medium with respect to an external magnetic field exhibits a hysteresis loop, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization is saturated,

exists in a positive area of the external magnetic field, and an exchange coupling magnetic field, which is determined from the magnetization curve, is not less than 1 kOe.

[Claim 12] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11, characterized by further including an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[Claim 13] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11 or 12, characterized in that the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer include Co, Ni or Fe, and the enhancing layer is formed of Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 14] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 11, characterized in that the magnetization—stabilizing layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material having a high magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer.

[Claim 15] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 14, characterized in that the magnetization—stabilizing layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Co, Ni, Fe, and CoNiFe alloy.

[Claim 16] The information-recording medium according

to claim 14, characterized in that the magnetizationstabilizing layer is formed of an alloy containing a transition metal and Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 17] The information-recording medium according to claim 15 or 16, characterized in that the recording layer is formed of a material which includes Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 18] A magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

an auxiliary magnetic layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material having a high magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which is formed between the recording layer and the auxiliary magnetic layer.

[Claim 19] The information-recording medium according to claim 18, characterized in that the auxiliary magnetic layer is formed of one selected from the group consisting of Co, Ni, Fe, and CoNiFe alloy.

[Claim 20] The information-recording medium according to claim 18, characterized in that the auxiliary magnetic layer is formed of an alloy containing a transition metal and Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 21] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 19 or 20, characterized in that the recording layer

is formed of a material containing Co, Ni or Fe.

[Claim 22] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 18 to 21, characterized by further comprising an enhancing layer which is provided between the recording layer and the non-magnetic layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the auxiliary magnetic layer and the recording layer.

[Claim 23] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 18 to 22, characterized in that the non-magnetic layer is formed of Ru.

[Claim 24] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 18 to 23, characterized in that the auxiliary magnetic layer has a film thickness of 1 to 5 nm.

[Claim 25] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 18 to 24, characterized by further comprising a substrate, a second non-magnetic layer, and a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer,

wherein the second non-magnetic layer is positioned between the substrate and the auxiliary magnetic layer on a side which is near to the auxiliary magnetic layer.

[Claim 26] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 18 to 24, characterized by further comprising a substrate, a second non-magnetic layer, and a

second auxiliary magnetic layer,

wherein the second non-magnetic layer is positioned between the substrate and the auxiliary magnetic layer on a side which is near to the auxiliary magnetic layer.

[Claim 27] The magnetic recording medium according to claim 25 or 26, characterized by further comprising an underlying base layer which is formed on the substrate.

[Claim 28] The magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1, 11 and 18, characterized in that the recording layer has a magnetization in the in-plane direction.

[Claim 29] A magnetic recording apparatus comprising: the magnetic recording medium according to any one of claims 1, 11 and 18;

a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and

a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION]

[TECHNICAL FIELD TO WHICH THE INVENTION BELONGS]

The present invention relates to a magnetic recording medium and a magnetic recording apparatus. In particular, the present invention relates to an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability

and which is preferable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus which is installed with the in-plane magnetic recording medium.

[0002]

[PRIOR ART]

Accompanying with the recent progress of the advanced information society, the multimedia, with which not only the character information but also the voice and image information can be processed at a high speed, are popularized. A magnetic recording apparatus, which is installed to a computer or the like, is known as one of the multimedia. At present, the development is advanced in order that the magnetic recording apparatus is miniaturized while improving the recording density of such a magnetic recording apparatus.

[0003]

A typical magnetic recording apparatus includes a plurality of magnetic disks which are rotatably installed onto a spindle. Each of the magnetic disks comprises a substrate and a magnetic film formed thereon. Information is recorded by forming a magnetic domain having a specified magnetization direction in the magnetic film.

[0004]

In order to realize the high density recording with the magnetic recording apparatus as described above, it is

demanded that the diameter of grains for constructing the magnetic film is made fine and minute and the interaction between the respective grains is lowered. However, a problem arises such that the thermal stability of the grains is lowered if the grain diameter is made fine and minute and the interaction between the grains is lowered.

[0005]

The known technique for improving the thermal stability of the magnetic disk, especially a magnetic disk having magnetization in the in-plane direction include a method in which a so-called keeper layer having soft magnetization is provided as an underlying base layer for a recording layer, and a method in which a layer having magnetization in a direction opposite to that of magnetization of a recording layer is provided. As one of the latter method, a technique is disclosed in a literature of E. N. Abarra et al. (E. N. Abarra et al., TECHNICAL REPORT OF IEICE. MR2000-34 (2000-10)) as shown in Fig. 6, in which the thermal stability is improved by forming an Ru thin film as a magnetic coupling layer between a recording layer of CoCrPtB and a magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB of a magnetic disk. In the structure of the magnetic disk shown in Fig. 6, when the Ru layer having a thickness of about 0.5 to 1 nm is allowed to intervene as the magnetic coupling layer between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, the exchange coupling is effected in an antiferromagnetic manner between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. Therefore, the layers have antiparallel magnetization, and hence the magnetization of the recording layer is stabilized by the magnetization-stabilizing layer. It is described in this literature that the antiferromagnetic exchange coupling effected by the Ru layer further thermally stabilizes the magnetization of the recording layer, making it possible to improve the recording and reproduction characteristics of the magnetic disk.

[0006]

[PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION]

However, in order to realize further advanced high density recording with a magnetic recording apparatus, it is required to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is provided with a magnetic disk that is more excellent in thermal stability than the magnetic disk disclosed in the literature described above.

[0007]

A first object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium, especially an in-plane magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability, and a magnetic recording apparatus provided with the same.

[8000]

A second object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is excellent in stability (recording stability) of recorded information.

[0009]

A third object of the present invention is to provide a magnetic recording medium which is suitable for high density recording, and a magnetic recording apparatus installed with the same.

[0010]

[MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM]

According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer;

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer; and

an enhancing layer which exists at least one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases

magnetization-stabilizing layer is as follows. In the case of the conventional type magnetic disk shown in Fig. 6, the recording layer of CoCrPtB and the magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB are stacked with the Ru layer intervening therebetween. In this case, the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer effect the exchange coupling via the Ru atom layer. It is considered that the exchange coupling is effected on the basis of the fact that the electron orbits are coupled between the Co atoms in the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer via the Ru atoms. Such a coupling is also found, for example, in the coupling in an artificial lattice of a GMR head.

[0013]

However, when the interface between the recording layer and the Ru layer is observed, then the crystal grains in the recording layer are rich in Co, and the grain boundary therebetween has a Cr-rich composition, because the recording layer is composed of CoCrPtB. As a result, it is considered that the Cr atoms, which amount is larger than that of the Co atoms, are exposed on the surface of the recording layer on the side of the Ru layer. The magnetization-stabilizing layer is also composed of the CoCr alloy (CoCrPtB) in the same manner as the recording layer. Therefore, it is considered that a large amount of

exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0011]

As a result of repeated investigations performed by the present inventors in order to further improve the magnetic disk having the conventional type structure shown in Fig. 6, it has been found out that the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetizationstabilizing layer can be remarkably improved by intervening a several-atoms-layered Co layer at an interface between the Ru layer (non-magnetic layer) and the recording layer and/or an interface between the Ru layer (non-magnetic layer) and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. The layer to be intervened at the interface is not limited to Co, but may be constructed with a variety of substances capable of improving the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer as described later In this specification, this layer is referred to as "enhancing layer", which functions to enhance the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetizationstabilizing layer.

[0012]

According to the knowledge of the present inventors, the reason why the enhancing layer successfully improves the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the

cr atoms for covering Co are exposed on the surface of the magnetization-stabilizing layer on the side of the Ru layer. It is assumed that the Cr atom layers inhibit the electron coupling between the Co atoms in the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer via the Ru atoms as described above, thereby weakening the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. In the present invention, the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer, on which the Cr atoms are exposed on the surface, is covered with the enhancing layer. Accordingly, it is considered that the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer is improved by the exchange coupling between the atoms such as Co for constructing the enhancing layer.

[0014]

The enhancing layer may be formed of Co, Ni or Fe, or a CoNiFe alloy. Alternatively, the enhancing layer may be formed of an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe and a transition metal, especially a noble metal such as Pt, Au, Ag, Cu, and Pd. The atom or the alloy as described above functions to make the coupling electronically via the non-magnetic layer so that the exchange coupling magnetic field is increased. Alternatively, when the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer is formed of a material

containing Co, Ni, or Fe, it is also effective to form the enhancing layer with a material containing Co, Ni, or Fe at a higher concentration than a concentration in the recording layer or the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0015]

The enhancing layer may exist at least at one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. However, it is desirable that the enhancing layer includes a first enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second enhancing layer which exists between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer in order to further enhance the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0016]

The magnetization-stabilizing layer may include a first magnetization-stabilizing layer and a second magnetization-stabilizing layer, the non-magnetic layer may include a first non-magnetic layer and a second non-magnetic layer, the first non-magnetic layer may be formed between the first magnetization-stabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and the second non-magnetic layer may be formed between the second

magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer. In this arrangement, the enhancing layer may exist at least at one of positions between the second non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the second non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and may include an auxiliary enhancing layer which exists at least at one of positions between the first magnetizationstabilizing layer and the first non-magnetic layer and between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer, and which increases exchange coupling between the first magnetizationstabilizing layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer. Further, the auxiliary enhancing layer may include a first auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the first magnetizationstabilizing layer, and a second auxiliary enhancing layer which is formed between the first non-magnetic layer and the second magnetization-stabilizing layer. The auxiliary enhancing layer may be composed of the same material as that for the enhancing layer described above.

[0017]

It is desirable that the enhancing layer (as well as the auxiliary enhancing layer) has a film thickness of 0.2 to 3 nm, preferably 0.2 to 2 nm, in order to obtain a significant enhancing effect for the exchange coupling.

[0018]

The non-magnetic layer may be formed of Ru. However, there is no limitation thereto. It is possible to use a transition metal such as Rh, Ir, Hf, Cu, Cr, Ag, Au, Re, Mo, Nb, W, Ta, and V, and a non-magnetic alloy based on the CoCr system such as CoCrRu. Ru is preferred in order to further enhance the exchange coupling. In the present invention, the non-magnetic layer has a function to magnetically couple the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. Therefore, the non-magnetic layer is also referred to as "magnetic coupling layer".

[0019]

In the magnetic recording medium of the present invention, the recording layer may be crystalline, and the crystalline phase may be composed of an alloy principally containing cobalt (Co). The Co alloy may contain Co as well as Cr, Pt, Ta, Nb, Ti, Si, B, P, Pd, V, Tb, Gd, Sm, Nd, Dy, Ho or Eu, or a combination thereof.

[0020]

When the recording layer contains chromium (Cr), it is possible to form a segregation portion of Cr at the grain boundary or in the vicinity of the grain boundary between the crystal grains (magnetic grains) principally containing Co. When the recording layer further contains Ta, Nb, Ti,

B or P, or a combination of these elements, the segregation of Cr is facilitated. Owing to the segregation, it is possible to reduce the magnetic interaction between the magnetic grains, and it is possible to decrease the number of magnetic grains for constructing the unit of inversion of magnetization. Therefore, it is possible to provide the magnetic recording medium which is strong against the thermal fluctuation regardless of the minute unit of inversion of magnetization, when the enhancing layer of the present invention is used in combination with the recording layer containing the foregoing additive in the CoCr alloy.

[0021]

The magnetic recording medium of the present invention may further comprise a substrate, and an underlying base layer which is formed on the substrate. In this arrangement, the magnetic recording medium may comprise the magnetization-stabilizing layer on the underlying base layer. The substrate may be formed of glass or plastic such as polycarbonate. The underlying base layer may be formed of Cr or Ni, or, Cr alloy or Ni alloy. The Cr alloy or the Ni alloy may contain Cr, Ti, Ta, V, Ru, W, Mo, Nb, Ni, Zr, or Al other than the base element. The underlying base layer is used in order to control the crystalline orientation and the lattice constant of the magnetic layer. The underlying base layer may be also used as a single

layer or a plurality of layers.

[0022]

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording medium characterized by comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material;

a magnetization-stabilizing layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material and which stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which exists between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer,

wherein a magnetization curve of the magnetic recording medium with respect to an external magnetic field exhibits a hysteresis loop, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization is saturated, exists in a positive area of the external magnetic field, and an exchange coupling magnetic field, which is determined from the magnetization curve, is not less than 1 kOe.

[0023]

The magnetic recording medium having the magnetization-stabilizing layer of the present invention

has a magnetic characteristic which is represented by a hysteresis loop as depicted by a magnetization curve as shown in Fig. 4. In the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4, a point, at which a rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field exhibits a local maximum when the external magnetic field is lowered after magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, exists in an area of positive magnetic field. It is considered that the sudden change of rate of change of magnetization is caused for the following reason. is, when the magnetization of the magnetic recording medium is saturated, both of the magnetizations of the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer are parallel, and the magnetization of the magnetization-stabilizing layer is inverted in the area in which the rate of change of magnetization exhibits the local maximum as the external magnetic field is lowered, thereby stabilizing the magnetization of the recording layer. In this area, a minor hysteresis loop as shown in Fig. 4 may be observed. The minor hysteresis loop is shown in Fig. 5. The exchange coupling magnetic field Hex, which is determined from the central point of the minor hysteresis loop, is not less than 1 kOe, preferably not less than 1.5 kOe, which is remarkably larger than that of the conventional type magnetic recording medium shown in Fig. 6. Therefore, it

is appreciated that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability.

[0024]

In order to generate the large exchange coupling magnetic field $H_{\rm ex}$, the enhancing layer may be provided at least at one of positions between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer and between the non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0025]

Alternatively, the large exchange coupling magnetic field H_{ex} can be generated by forming the magnetizationstabilizing layer of a ferromagnetic material having a higher magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer. such a ferromagnetic material, the same material as the material which may be used for the above-mentioned enhancing layer is preferred. For example, when the recording layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material containing Co, Ni, or Fe, the magnetization-stabilizing layer may be formed of a ferromagnetic material containing Co, Ni, or Fe at a higher concentration as compared with the recording layer. The auxiliary magnetic layer may be also formed of a metal simple substance such as Co, Ni, or Fe, or CoNiFe alloy. Alternatively, the auxiliary magnetic layer may be formed of an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe

and a transition metal, especially a noble metal such as Pt, Au, Ag, Cu, and Pd. As described above, in the magnetic recording medium of the second aspect, when the magnetization-stabilizing layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material having a higher magnetic atom concentration as compared with the recording layer, the magnetization-stabilizing layer exhibits a strong exchange coupling force between the magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer, in the same manner as in the case of the auxiliary magnetic layer of the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect which will be described later Therefore, it is possible to stabilize the on. magnetization of the recording layer. Namely, the magnetization-stabilizing layer, which is formed of a ferromagnetic material having a higher magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer, has the same function as that of the auxiliary magnetic layer of the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect. The magnetizationstabilizing layer in the magnetic recording medium of the second aspect of the present invention is a concept which includes the auxiliary magnetic layer of the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect.

[0026]

According to a third aspect of the present invention,

there is provided a magnetic recording medium comprising:

a recording layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic

material;

an auxiliary magnetic layer which is formed of a ferromagnetic material having a high magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer; and

a non-magnetic layer which is formed between the recording layer and the auxiliary magnetic layer.

In the magnetic recording medium according to the third aspect of the present invention, an auxiliary magnetic layer, which effects exchange coupling with the recording layer via the non-magnetic layer, is formed with a ferromagnetic material which has a high magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer. As such a ferromagnetic material, the same ferromagnetic material as that for the enhancing layer may be used. For example, when the recording layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material containing Co, Ni, or Fe, the auxiliary magnetic layer may be formed of a ferromagnetic material containing a magnetic atom such as Co, Ni, or Fe at a higher concentration as compared with the recording layer. The auxiliary magnetic layer may be also formed of a metal simple substance such as Co, Ni, or Fe, or CoNiFe alloy. Alternatively, the

auxiliary magnetic layer may be formed of an alloy containing Co, Ni, or Fe and a transition metal, especially a noble metal such as Pt, Au, Ag, Cu, and Pd. As described above, by the auxiliary magnetic layer formed with the same ferromagnetic material as that for the above-mentioned enhancing layer, the exchange coupling force, generated between the auxiliary magnetic layer and the recording layer, is larger than the exchange coupling force generated between the magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer of the magnetic recording medium as described in the section of prior art. Therefore, the thermal stability of the recording layer is further increased, thereby making it possible to realize further advanced high density recording.

[0028]

As described above, the magnetic recording medium of the first aspect of the present invention further stabilizes the magnetization of the recording layer, which is stabilized in the magnetization-stabilizing layer, by providing the enhancing layer in order to increase the exchange coupling force between the magnetization-stabilizing layer and the recording layer. On the other hand, in the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect of the present invention, a strong exchange coupling force is generated between the auxiliary magnetic layer and the

recording layer, it is therefore possible to stabilize the magnetization of the recording layer, in the same manner as in the case of the magnetic recording medium according to the first aspect as described above. Therefore, the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect of the present invention can increase the thermal stability of the recording layer with a simpler constitution as compared with the magnetic recording medium of the first aspect.

[0029]

In the magnetic recording medium according to the third aspect of the present invention, it is preferred that the auxiliary magnetic layer has a film thickness of 1 to 5 nm in order to effect a significant exchange coupling force exerted between the auxiliary magnetic layer and the recording layer.

[0030]

In the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect of the present invention, an enhancing layer may be provided between the non-magnetic layer and the recording layer in order to further increase an exchange coupling force generated between the recording layer and the auxiliary magnetic layer. The enhancing layer may be formed using the same material as that for the enhancing layer of the magnetic recording medium of the first aspect. It is preferred that the enhancing layer as described above

has a film thickness of 0.2 nm to 2.0 nm in order to obtain a significant enhancing effect of the exchange coupling force exerted between the recording layer and the auxiliary magnetic layer.

[0031]

The third magnetic recording medium of the present invention may further comprise a substrate, a second nonmagnetic layer, and a magnetization-stabilizing layer which thermally stabilizes magnetization of the recording layer, wherein the second non-magnetic layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer may exist between the auxiliary magnetic layer and the substrate, and the second non-magnetic layer may be positioned on a side which is near to the auxiliary magnetic layer. The second nonmagnetic layer may be formed of the same material as that for the non-magnetic layer as described above, and the magnetization-stabilizing layer may be formed of the same material as that for, for example, the recording layer. The magnetic recording medium as described above can further stabilize the magnetization of the recording layer by the magnetization-stabilizing layer.

[0032]

Further, the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect of the present invention may comprise a substrate, a second non-magnetic layer, and a second auxiliary magnetic

layer, wherein the second non-magnetic layer and the second auxiliary magnetic layer may exist between the substrate and the auxiliary magnetic layer, and the second non-magnetic layer may be positioned on a side which is near to the auxiliary magnetic layer. The second auxiliary magnetic layer may be formed by using the same material as that for the enhancing layer as described above. The magnetic recording medium having the structure as described above is extremely excellent in thermal stability, because the exchange coupling magnetic field is further increased by forming the second auxiliary magnetic layer.

[0033]

According to a fourth aspect of the present invention, there is provided a magnetic recording apparatus comprising:

the magnetic recording medium according to the first, the second or the third aspect of the present invention;

a magnetic head which is used to record or reproduce information on the magnetic recording medium; and

a driving unit which drives the magnetic recording medium with respect to the magnetic head.

[0034]

The magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time, because the magnetic recording

apparatus is installed with the magnetic recording medium which is excellent in thermal stability.

[0035]

[EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION]

The magnetic recording medium and the magnetic recording apparatus according to the present invention will be specifically explained below in accordance with embodiments and Comparative Examples. However, the present invention is not limited to the embodiments.

[0036]

[FIRST EMBODIMENT]

Fig. 1 shows a sectional view of a typical embodiment of the magnetic recording medium according to the present invention. A magnetic recording medium 10 comprises, on a glass substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2, a second underlying base layer 4, a magnetization-stabilizing layer 6, a first enhancing layer 8, a magnetic coupling layer (non-magnetic layer) 12, a second enhancing layer 8, a recording layer 16, and a protective layer 18. The respective layers were formed as follows by sputtering using a DC magnetron sputtering apparatus.

[0037]

An NiAl film was formed as the first metal underlying base layer 2 on the glass substrate 20 having a diameter of 2.5 inches (6.25 cm) by means of sputtering by using the DC

magnetron sputtering apparatus. An NiAl alloy having an atomic ratio of Ni:Al = 50:50 was used for a target. The NiAl film had a film thickness of 50 nm. The Ar gas pressure during the sputtering was 0.3 Pa, and the introduced electric power was 0.5 kW. The substrate was heated to 340 °C after the pressure of the sputtering chamber was reduced to be not more than 1×10^{-5} Pa before starting the sputtering. The speed of film formation was about 3 nm/second under this condition.

[0038]

A CrMo film was formed as the second metal underlying base layer 4 to have a film thickness of 20 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 2. A CrMo alloy containing Mo by 27 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0039]

A CoCrPtB film was formed as the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 to have a film thickness of 6 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 4. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0040]

Subsequently, a Co film was formed as the first

enhancing layer 8 to have a film thickness of 1 nm on the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6. Co was used for a target. The film formation during the sputtering was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2 except that the introduced electric power was 100 W, and the spacing distance between the substrate and the target was lengthened.

[0041]

Subsequently, an Ru film was formed as the magnetic coupling layer 12 to have a film thickness of 0.8 nm on the first enhancing layer 8. Ru was used for a target. The film formation condition during the sputtering was the same as that for the first enhancing layer 8.

[0042]

A Co film was formed as the second enhancing layer 14 in the same manner as the first enhancing layer 8. The first enhancing layer 8 and the second enhancing layer 14 function to increase the exchange coupling between the recording layer 16 and the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6.

[0043]

A CoCrPtB film having magnetization in the in-plane direction was formed as the recording layer 16 to have a film thickness of 18 nm on the second enhancing layer 14. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film

formation condition was the same as that for the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6.

[0044]

Finally, a carbon layer was formed as a protective film to have a film thickness of 5 nm on the CoCrPtB recording layer 16. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2. Thus, the magnetic disk 10 having the structure shown in Fig. 1 was produced.

[0045]

[Comparative Example 1]

A magnetic disk was produced as Comparative Example in the same manner as in the first embodiment except that the first and second enhancing layers were not formed. Fig. 7 shows a structure of the magnetic disk 50 of Comparative Example obtained as described above.

[0046]

[Evaluation of Magnetization Curve]

The magnetic characteristics of the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment were measured as follows. The magnetic field was applied with VSM (Vibration Sample Magnetometer) to observe the magnetization curve with respect to the external magnetic field. An obtained result is shown in Fig. 4. As appreciated from a hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4, an area exists, in which the magnetization

is suddenly lowered before the external magnetic field is zero when the external magnetic field is lowered after the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetization. In this area, a point appears, at which the rate of change of magnetization with respect to the external magnetic field $(\delta M/\delta H)$ is locally maximized. In this area, the magnetization curve depicts a minor loop which exhibits hysteresis. The reason why the minor loop appears is considered as follows. That is, the direction of magnetization of the recording layer 16 is parallel to that of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 before arrival at the local maximum point of the rate of change. However, the direction of magnetization of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 is inverted at the local maximum point.

[0047]

Fig. 5(a) shows a magnified view of the minor loop.

The minor loop resides in the magnetization curve which has been obtained such that the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetizations of the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, and then the magnetic field is lowered to stabilize the rate of change of magnetization, followed by increasing the external magnetic field again. It is noted that the magnetic field H, which

is obtained at the center of the loop and which is located at the midpoint between the upper end and the lower end of the minor loop, is known as the exchange coupling magnetic field Hex which exhibits the exchange coupling of magnetization between the recording layer 16 and the stabilizing layer 6. It has been revealed that H_{ex} is 1.4 kOe in the case of the magnetic disk obtained in this embodiment. On the other hand, in the case of the magnetic disk of Comparative Example, a hysteresis minor loop as shown in Fig. 5(b) is obtained, for which it has been revealed that Hex is 0.4 kOe. Therefore, the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer is remarkably improved in the present invention, because the first and second enhancing layers are provided at the interface between the recording layer and the magnetic coupling layer and at the interface between the magnetic coupling layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, respectively. For reference, it has been reported that the magnetic disk, which is disclosed in the literature described in the section of prior art, has Hex of about 450 (Oe).

[0048]

Further, the volume of activation V of each of the magnetic recording media obtained in the first embodiment and Comparative Example was measured to determine the value

Ku•V/(k•T) as an index of thermal stability of the magnetic recording medium. As a result, the value was about 71 in the case of the magnetic recording medium of the first embodiment, while the value was 65 in the case of the magnetic recording medium of Comparative Example. Also from this fact, it is understood that the magnetic recording medium of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability. Further, in the case of the magnetic recording medium of the embodiment, Brt (= 4π Mr•t (wherein Mr represents the residual magnetic field, and t represents the thickness)), which is an index to exhibit the possibility of high density recording of the in-plane magnetic recording medium, was about 44 Gµm.

[0049]

[First Modified Embodiment]

In the magnetic disk according to the present invention, the enhancing layer, which enhances the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer, may be provided at any one of the interface between the recording layer and the magnetic coupling layer (non-magnetic layer) and the interface between the magnetic coupling layer and the magnetization-stabilizing layer. As a modified embodiment of the first embodiment, Fig. 2 shows a structure of a magnetic disk 30 in which the first enhancing layer is not formed, and Fig.

3 shows a structure of a magnetic disk 40 in which the second enhancing layer is not formed.

[0050]

[Second Modified Embodiment]

In the first embodiment, each one layer of the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 and the magnetic coupling layer 12 has been formed. However, two layers of the former and the two layer of the latter may be formed. is, it is possible to provide a structure comprising, on a second underlying base layer 4 of CrMo, a first magnetization-stabilizing layer of CoCrPtB, a first enhancing layer, a first magnetic coupling layer of Ru, a second enhancing layer of Co, a second magnetizationstabilizing layer of CoCrPtB, a third enhancing layer, a second magnetic coupling layer of Ru, a fourth enhancing layer of Co, a recording layer of CoCrPtB, and a protective In this case, the first and second layer of carbon. enhancing layers (auxiliary enhancing layers) function to increase the exchange coupling between the first and second magnetization-stabilizing layers. The third and fourth enhancing layers function to increase the exchange coupling between the recording layer and the second magnetizationstabilizing layer. Alternatively, in the magnetic disk 30 shown in Fig. 2, a second magnetization-stabilizing layer, a second magnetic coupling layer, and a fourth enhancing

layer may be provided between the second enhancing layer 14 and the recording layer 16. Further, in the magnetic disk 40 shown in Fig. 3, a second magnetization-stabilizing layer, a fourth enhancing layer, and a second magnetic coupling layer may be provided between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the recording layer 16.

[0051]

[Second Embodiment]

A plurality of magnetic disks were produced in accordance with the same process as that used in the first embodiment. A lubricant was applied onto the protective layers of the respective disks, and then the disks were coaxially attached to a spindle of a magnetic recording apparatus. A schematic arrangement of the magnetic recording apparatus is shown in Figs. 8 and 9. Fig. 8 shows a top view of the magnetic recording apparatus, and Fig. 9 shows a cross-sectional view of the magnetic recording apparatus 60 taken along a broken line A-A' shown in Fig. 8. A thin film magnetic head, which was based on the use of a soft magnetic film having a high saturation magnetic flux density of 2.1 T, was used as a recording magnetic head. A dual spin bulb-type magnetic head, which had the giant magnetic resistance effect, was used for the purpose of reproduction. The recording magnetic head and the reproducing magnetic head were integrated into one

unit, and they are indicated as a magnetic head 53 in Figs. 8 and 9. The integrated type magnetic head 53 is controlled by a magnetic head-driving system 54. The plurality of magnetic disks 10 are coaxially rotated by the spindle 52 of a rotary driving system 51. The distance between the magnetic disk and the magnetic head surface of the magnetic recording apparatus was maintained to be 11 nm. A signal corresponding to 40 Gbits/inch² (6.20 Gbits/cm²) was recorded on the magnetic disk to evaluate S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 25 dB was obtained.

[0052]

In order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus 60, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 24.3 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 3 %.

[0053]

[Comparative Example 2]

The magnetic disk 50 of Comparative Example was incorporated into the magnetic recording apparatus in the

evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus, the magnetic recording apparatus 60 was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 22.5 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 10 %. Therefore, it is appreciated that the magnetic recording apparatus provided with the magnetic disk of the present invention is excellent in recording stability.

[0054]

[Third Embodiment]

A schematic arrangement of another specified embodiment of the magnetic recording medium according to the present invention is shown in Fig. 10. The magnetic recording medium 70 comprises, on a glass substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2, a second underlying base layer 4, an auxiliary magnetic layer 78, a magnetic coupling layer (non-magnetic layer) 12, a recording layer 16, and a protective layer 18. The respective layers were formed as follows by sputtering using a DC magnetron sputtering apparatus.

[0055]

At first, a glass substrate having a diameter of 2.5 inches (6.25 cm) was charged into a preparatory chamber of the DC magnetron sputtering apparatus. The pressure of the preparatory chamber was reduced so that the degree of vacuum was 1 x 10^{-5} Pa. After that, the glass substrate was heated at 200 °C for 10 minutes in order to remove any water from the surface of the glass substrate. Subsequently, the glass substrate was transported from the preparatory chamber to a film formation chamber having a degree of vacuum of 1 x 10^{-5} Pa. The glass substrate was heated to 340 °C in the film formation chamber.

[0056]

An NiAl film was formed as the first metal underlying base layer 2 on the heated glass substrate 20. An NiAl alloy having Ni:Al = 50:50 in atomic ratio was used for a target. The NiAl film had a film thickness of 50 nm. The Ar gas pressure during the sputtering was 0.3 Pa, and the introduced electric power was 500 W.

[0057]

A CrMo film was formed as the second metal underlying base layer 4 to have a film thickness of 20 nm on the first metal underlying base layer 2. A CrMo alloy containing Mo by 27 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0058]

Subsequently, a CoPt film was formed as the auxiliary magnetic layer 78 to have a film thickness of 2 nm on the second metal underlying base layer. A CoPt alloy containing Pt by 17 atomic % was used for a target. The film formation condition during the sputtering was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2 except that the introduced electric power was 100 W, and the spacing distance between the substrate and the target was lengthened.

[0059]

Subsequently, an Ru film was formed as the magnetic coupling layer 12 to have a film thickness of 0.8 nm on the auxiliary magnetic layer 78. Ru was used for a target. The film formation condition during the sputtering was the same as that for the auxiliary magnetic layer 78.

[0060]

A CoCrPtB film having magnetization in the in-plane direction was formed as the recording layer 16 to have a film thickness of 18 nm on the magnetic coupling layer. A $Co_{64}Cr_{20}Pt_{12}B_4$ alloy was used for a target. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2.

[0061]

Finally, a carbon layer was formed as the protective

film to have a film thickness of 5 nm on the recording layer 16 of CoCrPtB. The film formation condition was the same as that for the first metal underlying base layer 2. Thus, the magnetic disk 70 having the structure shown in Fig. 10 was produced.

[0062]

The magnetic field was applied to the magnetic disk obtained as described above with VSM in the same manner as in the first embodiment to observe the magnetization curve with respect to the external magnetic field. An obtained result is shown in Fig. 11. As understood from the hysteresis loop, in the same manner as in the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment, an area also existed in the magnetic disk produced in this embodiment, in which the magnetization is suddenly lowered before the external magnetic field is zero when the external magnetic field is lowered after the external magnetic field in the positive direction is applied to saturate the magnetization. As appreciated from Fig. 11, the magnetization curve depicts a minor loop which exhibits hysteresis in this area. A magnified view of the minor loop is shown in the lower part of Fig. 11. The exchange coupling magnetic field Hex was determined from the minor loop, in the same manner as in the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment. As a result, the exchange coupling magnetic field Hex was 1.7

k0e.

[0063]

Subsequently, a plurality of magnetic disks were produced in accordance with the same process as that described above. A lubricant was applied onto the protective layers of the respective magnetic disks. After that, the magnetic disks were incorporated into the magnetic recording apparatus shown in Figs. 8 and 9, in the same manner as in the second embodiment. A signal was recorded on the magnetic disk in the same manner as in the second embodiment by using the magnetic recording apparatus to evaluate S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 25 dB was obtained.

[0064]

Subsequently, in order to evaluate the recording stability of the magnetic recording apparatus as described above, the magnetic recording apparatus was placed in an environment at 80 °C at a humidity of 80 % for 100 hours, in the same manner as in the second embodiment. After the passage of 100 hours, the recorded signal was reproduced to measure S/N of the magnetic disk. As a result, a reproduction output of 24.5 dB was obtained. That is, the rate of decrease of the recording signal in the environment described above was 2 %. Therefore, according to the comparison with the magnetic recording apparatus of

Comparative Example 2, it is understood that the magnetic recording apparatus provided with the magnetic disk of the present invention is excellent in recording stability.

[0065]

[Third Modified Embodiment]

As a modified embodiment of the magnetic disk produced in the third embodiment, an enhancing layer 79 may be provided at the interface between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the recording layer 16 as shown in Fig. 12. The enhancing layer 79 may be formed by using the same material as that for the enhancing layer 8 of the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment. The enhancing layer 79 functions to increase the exchange coupling between the recording layer 16 and the auxiliary magnetic layer 78.

[0066]

[Fourth Modified Embodiment]

As another modified embodiment of the magnetic disk produced in the third embodiment, a magnetization—stabilizing layer 86 and a second magnetic coupling layer 82 may be provided on the second underlying base layer 3 in order to further stabilize the magnetization of the recording layer 16 as shown in Fig. 13. The magnetization—stabilizing layer 86 may be formed by using the same material as that for the magnetization—stabilizing layer 6 of the magnetic disk produced in the first embodiment. Ru

may be used for the second magnetic coupling layer 82 in the same manner as in the third embodiment. As still another modified embodiment, the magnetic disk shown in Fig. 13 may be constructed by substituting the magnetization-stabilizing layer 86 with the enhancing layer used in the first embodiment.

[0067]

In the foregoing, the present invention has been specifically explained with reference to the embodiments. However, the present invention is not limited thereto. The substrate, the first metal underlying base layer, the second metal underlying base layer, the auxiliary magnetic layer, the magnetization-stabilizing layer, the magnetic coupling layer, the first enhancing layer, the second enhancing layer, and the recording layer may be constructed with a variety of known materials without being limited to the materials described in the embodiments.

[0068]

[EFFECTS OF THE INVENTION]

In the magnetic recording medium of the first aspect of the present invention, the exchange coupling force between the recording layer and the magnetization—stabilizing layer is increased owing to the existence of the enhancing layer. Therefore, the magnetic recording medium according to the first aspect is excellent in

thermal stability. Even when the minute magnetic domains are formed for the high density recording, then the thermal fluctuation scarcely occurs, and it is possible to stably retain the recorded information over a long period of time. Further, the magnetic recording medium of the second aspect of the present invention is excellent in thermal stability because the magnetic recording medium has an exchange coupling magnetic field of not less than 1k0e, thereby making it possible to realize the high-density recording. Furthermore, in the magnetic recording medium of the third aspect of the present invention, the strong exchange coupling force is generated between the recording layer and the auxiliary magnetic layer owing to the auxiliary magnetic layer which is formed of the ferromagnetic material having the high magnetic atom concentration as compared with the ferromagnetic material for forming the recording layer. Therefore, in the same manner as the magnetic recording medium of the first aspect, the magnetic recording medium according to the third aspect is excellent in thermal stability with a simpler layer constitution compared with that of the magnetic recording medium according to the first aspect.

[0069]

The magnetic recording apparatus, which is provided with the magnetic recording medium of the present

invention, is excellent in recording stability. It is possible to realize the super high density recording exceeding, for example, 40 Gbits/inch² (6.20 Gbits/cm²).

[BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS]

- [Fig. 1] Fig. 1 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according a first embodiment.
- [Fig. 2] Fig. 2 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a modified embodiment of the first embodiment.
- [Fig. 3] Fig. 3 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to another modified embodiment of the first embodiment.
- [Fig. 4] Fig. 4 shows a graph illustrating a hysteresis loop (major loop) of the magnetic disk according to the first embodiment.
- [Fig. 5] Fig. 5 a graph illustrating a minor loop of the hysteresis loop shown in Fig. 4.
- [Fig. 6] Fig. 6 shows a sectional view illustrating a structure of a conventional magnetic disk.
- [Fig. 7] Fig. 7 shows a cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a comparative embodiment 1.
- [Fig. 8] Fig. 8 shows a schematic arrangement of a magnetic recording apparatus according to an example of a second embodiment of the present invention as viewed from a position thereover.

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- [Fig. 9] Fig. 9 shows a sectional view as viewed in a direction of A-A' illustrating the magnetic recording apparatus shown in Fig. 8.
- [Fig. 10] Fig. 10 shows a schematic cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk manufactured in a third embodiment of the present invention.
- [Fig. 11] Fig. 11 shows a graph illustrating a hysteresis loop (major loop) of the magnetic disk showin in Fig. 10, and a graph of enlarged image of a minor loop of the hysteresis loop.
- [Fig. 12] Fig. 12 shows a schematic cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to a modified embodiment of the third embodiment of the present invention.
- [Fig. 13] Fig. 13 shows a schematic cross-sectional structure of a magnetic disk according to another modified embodiment of the third embodiment of the present invention.

[EXPLANATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS]

- 2 first metal underlying base layer
- 4 second metal underlying base layer
- 6 magnetization-stabilizing layer
- 8 first enhancing layer
- 10 magnetic disk
- 12 magnetic coupling layer

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- 14 first enhancing layer
- 16 recording layer
- 20 substrate
- 52 spindle
- 53 magnetic head
- 60 magnetic recording apparatus
- 78 auxiliary magnetic layer

[TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT] Abstract

[ABSTRACT]

[PROBLEMS] To provide a magnetic recording medium for high-density recording which is excellent in thermal stability.

[MEANS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS] An in-plane magnetic recording medium 10 comprises, on a substrate 20, a first underlying base layer 2 of NiAl, a second underlying base layer 4 of CrMo, a magnetization-stabilizing layer 6 of CoPt, a magnetic coupling layer 12 of Ru, a second enhancing layer 8 of Co, a recording layer 16 of CoCrPtB, and a protective layer 18 of carbon. The magnetizationstabilizing layer 6 stabilizes the magnetization of the recording layer 16, and the magnetic coupling layer 12 provides the exchange coupling force which exerts between the recording layer 16 and the magnetization-stabilizing layer 6. The exchange coupling is remarkably improved by providing a first enhancing layer 8 of Co and a second enhancing layer 14 of Co in the interface between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the magnetizationstabilizing layer 6 and in the interface between the magnetic coupling layer 12 and the recording layer 16, respectively. Accordingly, it is possible to provide a magnetic recording apparatus which is excellent in recording stability over a long period of time in which the

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thermal stability of the magnetic recording medium is excellent.

[SELECTED DRAWINGS] Fig. 1

Fig. 1

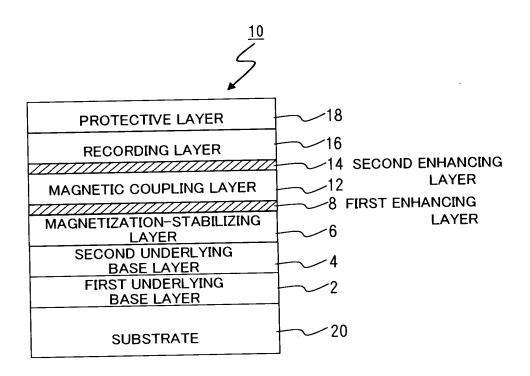


Fig. 2

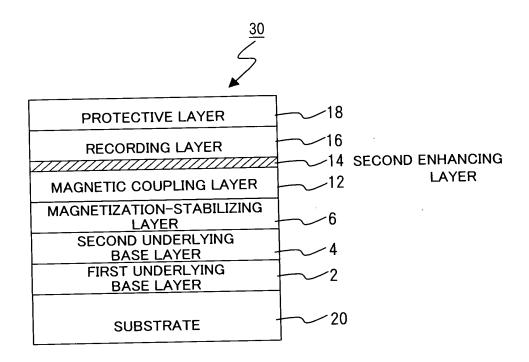


Fig. 3

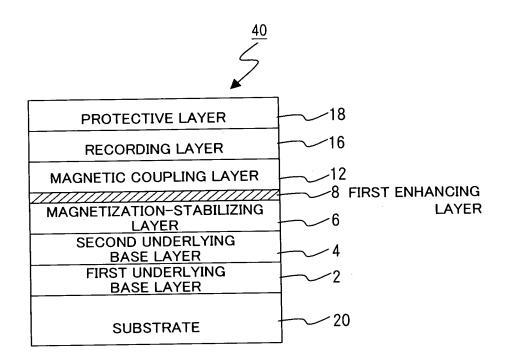


Fig. 4

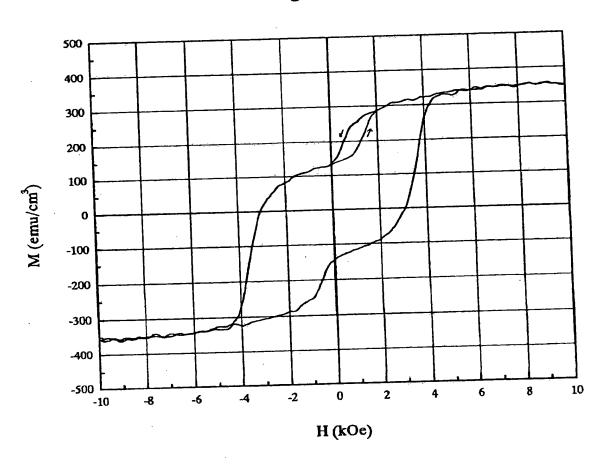
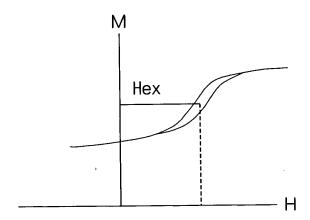


Fig. 5

(a)



(b)

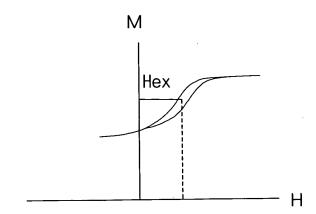


Fig. 6

PROTECTIVE LAYER
MAGNETIC RECORDING LAYER
MAGNETIC COUPLING
LAYER (Ru)
MAGNETIZATION- STABILIZING LAYER
UNDERLYING BASE LAYER
SUBSTRATE

Fig. 7

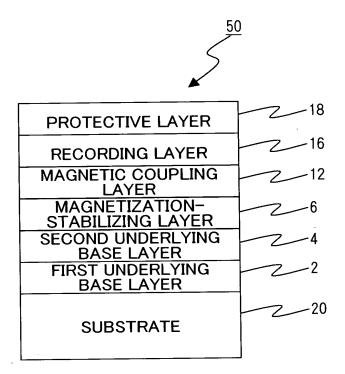


Fig. 8

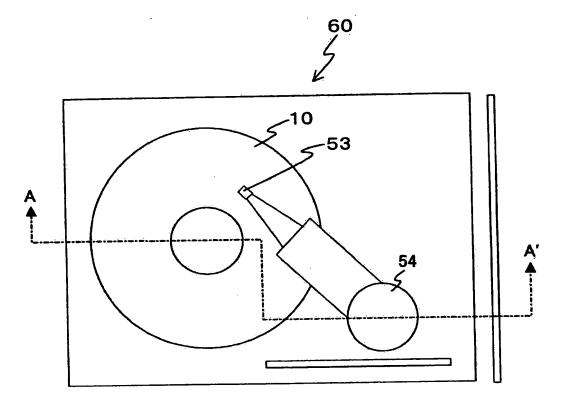


Fig. 9

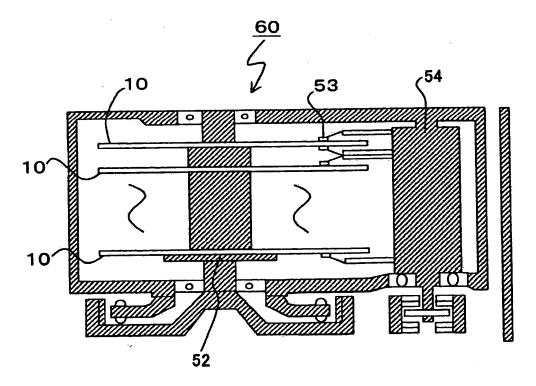


Fig. 10



PROTECTIVE LAYER	18
RECORDING LAYER	2 16
MAGNETIC COUPLING LAYER	12
AUXILIARY MAGNETIC LAYER	78
SECOND UNDERLYING BASE LAYER	2_3
FIRST UNDERLYING BASE LAYER	2_2
SUBSTRATE	2 20

Fig. 11

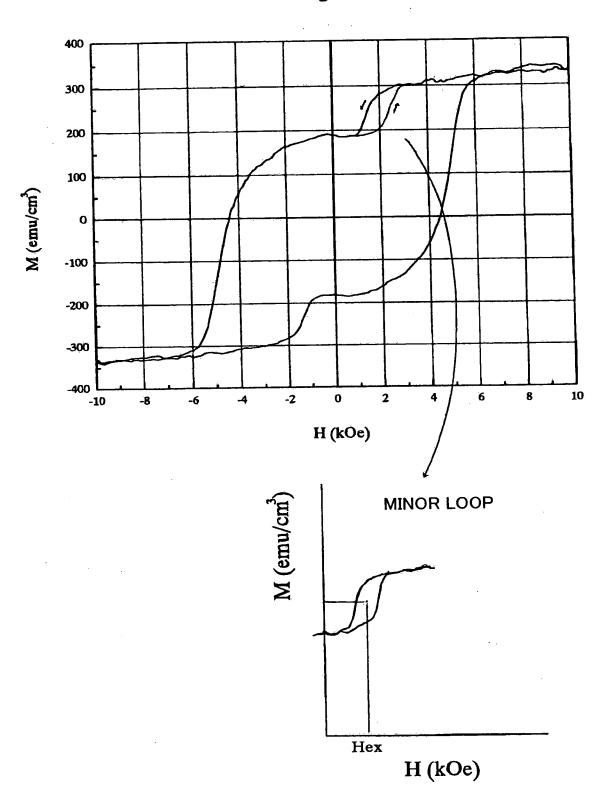


Fig. 12

PROTECTIVE LAYER	10
RECORDING LAYER	2_16
ENHANCING LAYER	79
 -	
MAGNETIC COUPLING LAYER	712
AUXILIARY MAGNETIC	78
LAYER	
SECOND UNDERLYING	23
BASE LAYER	-2
FIRST UNDERLYING BASE LAYER	
SUBSTRATE	
3323110112	
	_]

Fig. 13

PROTECTIVE LAYER	_
RECORDING LAYER	-2 16
ENHANCING LAYER	
MAGNETIC COUPLING	-2 12
LAYER	_ 70
AUXILIARY MAGNETIC LAYER	-2 78
SECOND MAGNETIC	
COUPLING LAYER	
MAGNETIZATION-	-2
STABILIZING LAYER	
SECOND UNDERLYING	-23
BASE LAYER	- 2
FIRST UNDERLYING	
BASE LAYER	
	2 20
SUBSTRATE	
	1